

III. REMARKS

1. Claims 1-9 are amended. Applicant appreciates the indication of allowable subject matter in claim 10.

2. Claims 1-6 and 9 are patentable under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) over Steiner et al., U.S. Pat. 6,273,602. Claim 1 recites a mail item feed module of a franking machine comprising a separator for separating envelope flaps from envelope bodies, of which an active zone of separation comprises a supple part. Nowhere is this disclosed or suggested in Steiner.

Steiner discloses a culinary whisk and method of making the same (Abstract). Nowhere does Steiner disclose or suggest a mail item feed module or that the culinary whisk separates envelope flaps from an envelope body. Thus, claim 1 is patentable over Steiner. Claims 2-6 and 9 are patentable at least by reason of their respective dependencies.

3. Claims 1-4 and 9 are patentable under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) over Chin, U.S. Pat. 5,800,540. Claim 1 recites a mail item feed module of a franking machine comprising a separator for separating envelope flaps from envelope bodies, of which an active zone of separation comprises a supple part. Nowhere is this disclosed or suggested in Chin.

Chin discloses a method and apparatus for reconstructing target tissue by grafting using a stabilizing balloon cannula having an endoscope for visualizing the placement of the graft during the procedure (Abstract). There is absolutely no disclosure or suggestion in Chin of a mail item feed module or that apparatus of Chin separates envelope flaps from an envelope body. Thus,

claim 1 is patentable over Chin. Claims 2-4 and 9 are patentable at least by reason of their respective dependencies.

4. Claims 1-3, 5 and 8-9 are patentable under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) over Traintinger, U.S. Pat. 5,752,530. Claim 1 recites a mail item feed module of a franking machine comprising a separator for separating envelope flaps from envelope bodies, of which an active zone of separation comprises a supple part. Nowhere is this disclosed or suggested in Traintinger.

Traintinger discloses that foreign hair is attached to naturally grown scalp hair (Abstract). There is absolutely no disclosure or suggestion in Traintinger of a mail item feed module or that the hair attachment method of Traintinger separates envelope flaps from an envelope body. Thus, claim 1 is patentable over Traintinger. Claims 2-3, 5, 8 and 9 are patentable at least by reason of their respective dependencies.

5. Claim 7 is patentable under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) over Steiner. Claim 7 depends from claim 1 and is patentable over Steiner because Steiner fails to disclose or suggest all the features of claim 1 as described above.

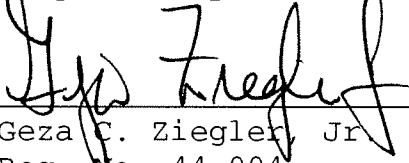
Further, claim 7 recites that the fixation means [of the mail item feed module] comprises a plastic material. One skilled in the art would not be motivated to modify the culinary whisk of Steiner to achieve the separator of the mail item feed module claimed by Applicant. Thus, claim 7 is patentable for this additional reason.

6. Claim 3 is amended to overcome the rejection under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph.

For all of the foregoing reasons, it is respectfully submitted that all of the claims now present in the application are clearly novel and patentable over the prior art of record, and are in proper form for allowance. Accordingly, favorable reconsideration and allowance is respectfully requested. Should any unresolved issues remain, the Examiner is invited to call Applicants' attorney at the telephone number indicated below.

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Respectfully submitted,



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13 Dec 2004

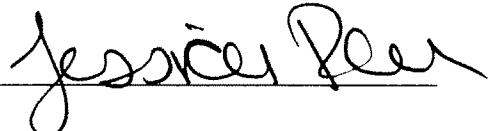
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